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**DIRECTIONS**: In order to better understand “Don’t ask, Don’t tell” we need to hear arguments from top government officials on the issue. Read the questions below to prepare for reading the article. Then, read the article below with the class. Finally, answer the questions.

1. Who are the opponents of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy that are quoted in the article? Why do opponents believe that the policy should be repealed?
2. Who are the supporters of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy that are quoted in the article? Why do they believe that the policy should not be repealed?
3. What further information would you want to know about the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy?
4. At this point, do you think the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy should be repealed? Why or why not?

**Top Defense Officials Seek to End ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’**

**By**[**ELISABETH BUMILLER**](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/b/elisabeth_bumiller/index.html?inline=nyt-per)**, February 3, 2010**

WASHINGTON — The nation’s top two defense officials called Tuesday for an end to the 16-year-old “don’t ask, don’t tell” law, a major step toward allowing openly gay men and women to serve in the United States military for the first time.

“No matter how I look at the issue, I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens,” Adm. [Mike Mullen](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/m/michael_g_mullen/index.html?inline=nyt-per), the chairman of the [Joint Chiefs of Staff](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/j/joint_chiefs_of_staff/index.html?inline=nyt-org), told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

As a murmur swept through a hearing room packed with gay rights leaders, Admiral Mullen said it was his personal belief that “allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly would be the right thing to do.”

In 1993, Gen. [Colin L. Powell](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/colin_l_powell/index.html?inline=nyt-per), the chairman of the Joint Chiefs at the time, opposed allowing gay men and lesbians to serve openly but supported a compromise, which was the “don’t ask, don’t tell” bill passed by Congress. Under the policy, gay men and lesbians may serve as long as they keep their sexual orientation secret.

In contrast to Admiral Mullen, Defense Secretary [Robert M. Gates](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/g/robert_m_gates/index.html?inline=nyt-per) was more cautious, even as he acknowledged that the question was not whether the law would be repealed but how the Pentagon might best prepare for the change.

Senator[John McCain](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/m/john_mccain/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of Arizona, said that while the law was not perfect, its repeal was too much to ask of a military that is already under stress fighting two wars. He said, “The day that the leadership of the military comes to me and says, ‘Senator, we ought to change the policy,’ then I think we ought to consider seriously changing it.”

In the interim, Mr. Gates announced that the military was moving toward enforcing the existing policy “in a fairer manner” — a reference to the possibility that the Pentagon would no longer take action to discharge service members whose sexual orientation is revealed by third parties or jilted partners, one of the most onerous aspects of the law.

Mr. Gates said that he had asked the Pentagon to make a recommendation on the matter within 45 days, but that “we believe that we have a degree of latitude within the existing law to change our internal procedures in a manner that is more appropriate and fair to our men and women in uniform.”

Mr. Levin said he was considering introducing an amendment to this year’s defense authorization bill that would call for a moratorium (freeze) on discharges under the existing law.

Mr. Gates said the review would examine changes that might have to be made to Pentagon policies on benefits, base housing, fraternization and misconduct, and would also study the potential effect on unit cohesion, recruiting and retention.

For further information, Mr. Gates said he would ask the RAND Corporation to update a 1993 study on the effects of allowing openly gay men and lesbians to serve. That study concluded they could do so if the policy was given strong support from the military’s senior leaders.

On one thing, Mr. Gates, Admiral Mullen and Republicans on the committee agreed: many gay men and lesbians are serving honorably and effectively in the military today, despite a policy that has led to more than 13,000 discharges, including those of much-needed Arabic translators.

“I have served with homosexuals since 1968,” Admiral Mullen told the committee. He added, “Everybody in the military has, and we understand that.”

Gay rights groups embraced the comments from Admiral Mullen and Mr. Gates, even as they criticized the Pentagon review as moving too slowly.

Polls now show that a majority of Americans support openly gay service — a majority did not in 1993 — but there have been no recent, broad surveys of the 1.4 million active-duty personnel.